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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000159

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA MEETS ARMENIAN DFM: PROGRESS BUT NO
MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH

REF: A. ANKARA 144

[1](#)B. ISTANBUL 44

[1](#)C. 06 ANKARA 5562

[1](#)D. 06 YEREVAN 1371

Classified by Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner for
Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The January 24 meeting in Istanbul between Turkish MFA DG Resit Uman and Armenian DFM Kirakossian, which MFA undertook on FM Gul's instruction, appears to have made some progress in the countries' ongoing discussion about establishing commissions to look at both the events of 1915 and to examine normalization of relations between the two countries. Atmospherics were excellent. It produced no major breakthrough on Turkey-Armenia relations in the wake of Hrant Dink's murder on January 19, but the GOT cleared up what MFA termed as a misconception on sequencing by the GOAM regarding the GOT's last commissions proposal (refs c and d). MFA told Kirakossian that the Turks have no pre-conditions to setting up these commissions; both could operate at the same time. Kirakossian welcomed this clarification and undertook to discuss it in Yerevan and respond soon in writing. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) We met with new MFA Deputy DG for Caucasus and Central Asia Umit Yardim and Department Head Suleyman Gokce to discuss the January 24 meeting between MFA Director General for Caucasus and Central Asia Resit Uman and Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakossian. DFM Kirakossian was in Istanbul to attend Hrant Dink's funeral on January 23 (refs a and b). Gokce said FM Gul had called DFM Kirakossian prior to the meeting to express condolences about Hrant Dink, his wish that they would have a useful meeting and his hope to see DFM Kirakossian in Turkey more often. The Istanbul meeting, he added, took place on Gul's direct order.

[1](#)3. (C) Gokce and Yardim characterized the two-hour long meeting as constructive and friendly and said they believed it would "re-invigorate the whole process" of establishing commissions between Turkey and Armenia. Yardim said the GOAM had misunderstood the GOT's last proposal of September 8 (refs c and d). Kirakossian reportedly stated the GOAM had evaluated the Turkish proposal of establishing two commissions as a step backwards. The GOAM thought the GOT wanted the historians commission established first, as a pre-condition to discussing bilateral issues such as the

opening of the border in the context of an inter-governmental commission. Yardim said that was not the case; Uman told Kirakossian that there were no pre-conditions to the setting up of these commissions. Kirakossian now reportedly understood and welcomed the idea that both commissions (or "tracks") could happen at the same time. Yardim said Kirakossian undertook to discuss the issue in Yerevan and get back to the GOT with a written response soon (although he gave no timeline). Yardim added that the MFA has asked for a quick turnaround from Yerevan.

¶4. (C) Gokce, who was present at the Uman-Kirakossian meeting, said that Uman told Kirakossian that the GOT is sincere and wants to remain engaged and have this process move forward. Gokce told Kirakossian that actions by the Armenian diaspora to push genocide resolutions in countries such as France and the U.S. do not help the GOT to make courageous moves such as normalizing relations or opening the border; just the opposite. Gokce noted there was no response but he believed Kirakossian had taken the message on board. Kirakossian reportedly said that the events of 1915 are "fact" and that the GOAM's priority is opening the border.

¶5. (C) Gokce told us that Nagorno-Karabakh and Turkey's good relations with Azerbaijan also remain a factor in any border calculations; the GOT would have to consult carefully with the Azeris before making any bold moves.

¶6. (C) Comment: Gokce stressed that the Turks were pleased -- and perhaps a bit surprised -- by the warm and constructive atmosphere of the discussions. The Turks remained sincere in wanting to move this forward. He noted that Kirakossian had been the Armenian representative at the previous bilateral

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"Vienna" meetings (the Turkish representative was then Deputy Under Secretary Uzumcu, now Turkish Ambassador to Tel Aviv), so he was well briefed on the issues. The Turks seemed optimistic but cautioned that Kirakossian had to return to Yerevan for the GOAM's stamp of approval.

¶7. (C) Gokce said the MFA would issue a statement that would be positive and yet deliberately vague. Following is the full text of MFA statement issued on January 25 (informal Embassy translation):

Our Ministry has been following reports in some media organizations recently on Armenian Deputy FM Arman Kirakossian's announcement that Armenia was ready to establish relations with Turkey without preconditions. Since the Armenian government has made similar announcements at various times until now, the most recent announcement does not indicate that it is a new initiative.

Turkey retains the desire to develop relations with all its neighbors based on the principles of mutual confidence and respect. Although this has been the case, we also find it useful to emphasize that establishing, developing and strengthening relations and cooperation within the bilateral and regional framework are not only dependent on the steps that Turkey takes but that they will be possible if relevant sides demonstrate reciprocal will and steps. Within this context and the framework of the constructive attitude that our country has demonstrated for furthering dialogue with Armenia, at various periods a series of concrete steps were taken. Our proposal for establishing a joint history commission is a concrete example of this.

As a result of this approach, we had a meeting that took place in a constructive and positive atmosphere yesterday in Istanbul with Deputy FM Arman Kirakossian, who arrived in our country for the Hrant Dink funeral ceremony.

We sincerely hope that the tragic incident of last week would contribute to the creation of a new atmosphere in Turkish-Armenian relations and that within this environment

Armenia would respond to our good will efforts for overcoming the stalemate in our relations.

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